

Interview with Sammy Seay and James Cochran

Interview by Richard Killblane

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[Danny Cochran had dropped out of high school and went to work. He lost his job so he and a buddy enlisted for infantry and jump school on the “buddy system” so they would go through training together. Danny liked the adrenaline rush and wanted to go to Vietnam, but he had broken his arches when young and his feet were swelling up during the runs with boots and road marches with full field pack at Ft Jackson, SC. He was infantry AIT at Jackson and also practiced for jump school, but his drill sergeant warned him he would not be able to complete jump school because of the swelling. He had passed all the mechanical tests but they sent him to truck driver school on Ft Jackson. His buddy ended up in the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in Vietnam.]

**Killblane:** Would you state your name?

**Cochran:** Danny Cochran.

**Seay:** Sammy Seay.

**Killblane:** What I'd like to know to first is how you got into the Army, and how you became truck drivers?

**Cochran:** I was Regular Army and my MOS [Military Occupation Skill] was truck driver. We got to Cam Ranh Bay and they shipped me up to the 523<sup>rd</sup> [Transportation Company] in the Cha Rang Valley. I started out driving cargo and some gun truck driver got short time so I took his place.

**Killblane:** When did you join the Army and when did you go to Vietnam?

**Cochran:** I was in Vietnam in '70 and '71, so I went through AIT [Advanced Individual Training] and boot camp right before that.

**Killblane:** What month did you arrive in Vietnam?

**Cochran:** September.

**Killblane:** September, '70?

**Cochran:** Yeah.

**Killblane:** Okay. How did you get in the Army and become a truck driver?

**Seay:** I was drafted, took basic in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Moved to Fort Hood, Texas, where we dealt with 10-ton dragon wagons and 5-tons. Spent a few months there and went to Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang and I believe that was my base camp. That's where I ETSed [End of term of Service] from.

**Killblane:** What month and year did you get to Vietnam?

**Seay:** I got there the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, '71. Approximately the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, that may vary a day or two.

**Killblane:** How long did you drive trucks before you got on the gun truck?

**Cochran:** Probably a month or two. I got on the gun truck pretty fast.

**Killblane:** How was that?

**Cochran:** I got a short-timer, they liked my driving and the crew liked me, so they let me up.

**Killblane:** Tell me about what it was like driving trucks in Vietnam before you were on the gun truck.

**Cochran:** I don't know, depends on if there was a monsoon. A lot of times all you have to go by in monsoon season are telephone poles on the side of the road, (?). You couldn't even see the road in monsoon half the time. I liked driving. It wasn't too bad.

**Killblane:** What about the idea that someone was going to shoot at you while you're driving?

**Cochran:** Well you always had that thought in your head. It didn't matter where you were at.

**Killblane:** How did you deal with that?

**Cochran:** Take it.

**Killblane:** What about you? How long did you drive before you got on a gun truck?

**Seay:** I can't give you an exact time, two weeks. Five-ton cargo, very unique situation, something I've never been used to before, never been a combat zone before. When you're new in country, of course you're better known as the "newbies" or the new guys. You didn't know what to expect and didn't know what was going on. You go through this phase of just being absolutely scared to death because, I like living and I think most people do. You go through this phase of just being really scared, constantly on guard, you can't sleep. Every little strange sound you're not used to hearing put you on edge. Over a period of time I guess you learn what's actually taking place. When you don't know anybody when you get there and you start to be friends with different people. Some have been there [a while] we called them old timers. Some of them would kind of take you under their wing and tell you what's going on and help you. Basically I guess what most guys would have to agree with they wanted to find out what kind of person you were before they put any confidence in you. Pretty well I guess and you prove yourself in time.

**Killblane:** How long did it take you to go through that adaptation phase where you finally got to where you knew what was going on?

**Seay:** I don't know where we got to the point where we really knew what was going on. I think at some point in time, we got to the point that we could kind of deal with it and have some idea of maybe what could or was taking place based on what was going on around us on daily activities and things. I don't know the amount of time. You go through this like you're in a different time zone, like time is standing still and you don't really mean anything. You're just there to do a job and you're thinking about home a lot. You just kind of stand still in time.

**Killblane:** What was the destinations for most of your runs?

**Cochran:** I started out in the Cha Rang Valley so I went all the way northward back when we the 523<sup>rd</sup> to start with when we moved into Quang Tri, Phu Bai, [Camp] Vandegrift, Khe Sanh and all that. So when we were down in the valley down there we'd run a lot of the fire base on down south a little further I can't remember a lot of the places really when we moved on up north we'd run LZ [Landing Zone] uplift we'd run a lot of firebases stuff like that. When we got to Vandegrift, which is right below Khe Sanh, we'd run Khe Sanh most of the time back down maybe Quang Tri, Phu Bai sometimes down to Da Nang and haul stuff back. We were going a lot.

**Killblane:** When did you move north?

**Cochran:** We were probably in country about three months when we started moving north we just kept on moving. We had to convoy hundreds of trucks across An Khe Pass, [so we convoyed] on up to Da Nang all the way every time you cross [a mountain pass] you could look back and all you'd see was trucks, for miles. They had flatbed tractors, 5-tons, you name it. We moved a whole outfit. We got trucks from different units to come in and help with the move. There ain't no telling how many gun trucks was in that convoy. There were gun trucks, gun trucks, and gun trucks.

**Killblane:** Did you reach your new camp in one day?

**Cochran:** No. No. We'd maybe reach maybe a compound somewhere and we'd bunk there. Sometimes it seemed like we'd run all day, all night, and maybe all day the next day until we got to a safe area and park them. Then take eight hours, ten, twelve hours, then we'd be gone again, refuel.

**Killblane:** How long did it take to reach your new destination?

**Cochran:** About three or four days, I guess. That's a long time ago. It's hard to remember all that.

**Killblane:** What do you remember about being moved up north?

**Seay:** I wasn't moved up north. I went to Phu Bai that was my area.

**Killblane:** You started out there?

**Seay:** I started out there, we were already at Phu Bai and we'd run convoys from there down across Hai Van Pass down to Da Nang and back up, through Hue City, Tan My Ramp. We'd always go out there on the milk run.

**Killblane:** Why did they call it the milk run?

**Seay:** They're just kind of goofing off and it was boring and not a lot of activity. You go out there and you got so many trucks waiting to get loaded and you just sit there and look at the water or you do this or do that. It was a boring job. Actually, you go into the mode, I guess, of actually seeing some type of activity take place and you just got bored of sitting. Too much time to think was the biggest thing. And, if you left away and turned left and you went toward Rock Pile and Quang Tri and on up to Khe Sanh, Vandegrift on up that way. It was just a back and forth thing, you never knew where you were going to go, highway ops, they always let you know where you needed to be. That's pretty well it. A lot of firebases we went to, I do not remember the names, I don't remember where they were. It was just a lot of Montagnard villages and things we went through and stopped at and they were pallets so we didn't have to dispose of them or that type thing. But they helped us. I have found to be very honorable people, they didn't steal.

**Killblane:** The Montagnards?

**Seay:** Yeah. Unlike the people who were there to help. Of course when we'd haul a little powder and projos [projectiles] and whatever on the firebase where it might be and we had to expose those pallets. Well, when we come back in the Montagnards village and stop and they'd just stand there and look at you, and you point and say okay, and they vanished. Well, it helped them and it helped us, too. It's just kind of a thing; you never know where you're going to be. Night convoys, you'd pull security not just for convoy but pipeline crew maybe. They had to work at night, the gun trucks go out for security and all they type thing. The gun trucks basically were just armored vehicles that people, over a period of time, got to depend on, not that we were any better than anybody else. I feel like everybody was pretty well equal as long as they were pulling their weight. It was team effort. The gun trucks proved themselves and became part of what was taking place.

**Killblane:** What was your favorite run?

**Seay:** I don't know if I can answer that.

**Killblane:** What about you?

**Cochran:** Probably when we'd go down to Da Nang.

**Killblane:** Why?

**Cochran:** We were safe.

**Killblane:** What about the view of the ocean?

**Cochran:** It was pretty.

**Killblane:** Tell me about the gun truck you were on.

**Cochran:** I was on The Ace after we rebuilt it. The old Ace went off the cliff into the river going to Khe Sanh the road caved off with the truck. We rebuilt it back, but I was on the [King] Kong running it when The Ace went off.

**Killblane:** The Kong, the King Kong?

**Cochran:** Right. After The Ace went off they got afraid that it was a top-heavy truck. The roads were muddy and slick, and they got afraid it was going to off the cliff, too. We built the new Ace back and they put the Kong on the loaner because some other company so I got on the Ace to crew it to run Khe Sanh and rode the Ace up through there until they pulled out Vandergrift and back to Phu Bai.

**Killblane:** What was your duty on the Ace?

**Cochran:** Gunner.

**Killblane:** What were your responsibilities? What were you supposed to do on the Ace to get it ready for convoy and during convoys?

**Cochran:** About everything we did was joint deal. Everybody did. Mine was to keep my .50's clean and if they needed help, if anybody else needed help, ammo stop. Whatever we had to do it was joint deal everybody did it. Flat tire, we'd get out and help change the tire. Nobody did anything without some of the others helping.

**Killblane:** Where you given any type of training once you got on the Ace?

**Cochran:** From the crew.

**Killblane:** What kind of training did you go through?

**Cochran:** Just common sense training out there by ourselves. You already know because I was on the King Kong before I got on the Ace. Actually it was most of my whole crew that was on the Ace.

**Killblane:** How long were you on the King Kong before you were on the Ace?

**Cochran:** I moved out of Cha Rang Valley on the King Kong, so I was already on one when I got there.

**Killblane:** What were the armament on the King Kong and the Ace of Spades?

**Cochran:** The King Kong was APC [Armored Personnel Carrier] body, but inside it was steel-plating on the wall of it and the floor flared down it. The Ace was double wall filled with sand bags.

**Killblane:** What about armament, weapons?

**Cochran:** .50s, the Ace had three .50s on it then, signal in the back and two on the front corners I think. We had two or three M60s, M79 grenade launcher, buckshot rounds, .45 grape gun, shotgun, about anything you can think of, M16s.

**Killblane:** Why so many different weapons?

**Cochran:** You always to extra precaution.

**Killblane:** For any contingencies.

**Cochran:** For any thing.

**Killblane:** Tell me about your gun truck..

**Seay:** I was on the Ace of Spades.

**Killblane:** Did you get on it after he had been on it?

**Seay:** I was on the Ace when he was on there. He came off before I did. I drove part time depending on where you was needed. I was rear .50 twin gunner. At that point in time they Ace had four .50s on it, twins on the back and singles on right and left corner of the front. We had .60s like he already said, and we were standing on about, I think don't quote me, about 9,000 round of .50 caliber ammo. I can't remember how many 60s we carried. Like he said; 60s, 79, and M16. We all know a lot of it wasn't authorized, but you took what you could get and glad to have it. It kind of went that way, you know?

**Killblane:** As a driver what was your preferred weapon?

**Seay:** About the only thing you could deal with was the armor plating, you had portholes in front and view ports on the right and left for the mirrors. If you could a handgun you took it. It's

easy to get around close range but not if you had M60 or M79. That's pretty well all you could deal with in there.

**Killblane:** I know a lot of gunners preferred the M79. Is there any reason why?

**Seay:** Yeah it had a lasting effect. Of course a lot of things we wanted we didn't have. And a lot of things we had probably didn't work as well as some of the others. But we didn't throw any of it away. Everybody has a preference. It's like buying a new car. It was a team effort like Danny said, it was a team effort. The drivers, the gunners, the gun truck is totally useless without a driver. And, at all cost the primary concern and responsibility of that gun truck was and all the team was to make sure that truck will be able to roll at any time. You had what you thought was enough ammo and all the guns were clean and ready to go, and this was a team effort. The gun truckers have a real strong, unique bond. Something I don't have the words to explain. Your sole purpose was to naturally protect yourself. The convoy had to get through whatever it took. That was the gun truck's sole purpose. I would call it security for the convoy. The gun trucks were intimidators, very much so. Whatever the gun truck had to do, they just done it. If one got in trouble you just hollered and another one would be on their way. If they weren't already in the convoy which most of the time you had two or three trucks depending on how long the convoy was. Gun trucks were a very unique thing.

**Killblane:** Was there a pattern to it like one per five, one per ten?

**Cochran:** It depends on how big the convoy was I guess. The bigger the convoy the more gun trucks. Usually most of the time every ten trucks had a gun truck. It depended upon where you were at and if you thought there might be trouble or not. If it was a safe area may not as many gun trucks.

**Killblane:** Was there a pattern as to where your gun truck was in the convoy?

**Cochran:** Not really. We didn't say lead that too much, you know not really because you had to leave the command to lead all that. We kind of fell in spots unless they wanted them in some particular spots.

**Killblane:** What do you mean?

**Cochran:** Well, unless the command team wanted the gun truck in some particular spot. By the time they lined up we just started feeding off into the convoy along with them.

**Killblane:** So, you could be in any one place in the convoy at any one time, right?

**Cochran:** Well, if we wanted to pull out and move up we could. We could drop back and catch up. We pretty well if we thought we needed to move up some to see what's going on we could pull out and move up. We'd sit on the side of the road and watch the trucks. Or maybe, you know, we wasn't deadline to any one particular spot.

**Killblane:** What could you add to that about where the position of where the gun truck was?

**Seay:** Well, like Danny said, I don't remember any particular place we were supposed to be. The Ace did run the end of the convoy, tail the convoy rather, what we called it a lot. Taking up the rear and a lot of people would put it. A lot of the gun truck's responsibility, too, is I would call it traffic control. It's not just firing weapons, it was you made sure that convoy stayed together.

**Killblane:** Tell me about it. Could you define the traffic control?

**Seay:** It's like if you were coming to an intersection and you have all this traffic, and there was a lot of it over there, all types of vehicles and bicycles and whatever. But you blocked the road or whatever you had to do to keep that convoy together. That's top priority rolling through and it had to get through. That's pretty well it. You just stayed, it wasn't a written-down thing, it was just something that came natural after awhile of doing it that everybody just knew what was going to happen. Or they thought was going to happen and you done it. Unless somebody said otherwise that's pretty well how you done it.

**Killblane:** Did you, as with the previous crew, pick that up, or did you guys just figured it out on your own?

**Seay:** Previous crew? I didn't have a previous crew.

**Killblane:** Oh.

**Seay:** I don't understand the question?

**Killblane:** When you went on the Ace was there NCOIC [Noncommissioned Officer in Charge] before who had experience before you?

**Seay:** Yes.

**Killblane:** And they trained you up?

**Seay:** Yes.

**Killblane:** That's what I mean.

**Seay:** All of our training was, I'd say 90% of it, OJT [on-the-job-training], hands-on. What you were shown first of all, most of the time before a person went on a gun truck he's be taken out to



a test fire range. You had to be capable of knowing this weapon, this gun, whatever. You had to know how to fire it, how to make it fire. You had to know something about it because a lot of people had been taken off of gun trucks after a one-day trial. They just didn't prove out. You had to have some knowledge of what gun trucks were about. The weapons that were on this truck were an assumption with this truck and the crew. If you messed up believe you me, you heard about it. Because this was a team. Everybody there had a job to do and everybody depended on each other like brothers. And you did it good.

**Killblane:** How did you feel being on that gun truck?

**Seay:** How did I feel about what?

**Killblane:** Being part of that gun truck crew, being part of the Ace?

**Seay:** It was definitely a learning experience. It was a family. I was a very, very close-knit family. It was a feeling of being proud. Here you are 19 or 20-years old with this much fire power at your fingertips. But, you kind of went through this phase of leaving the States, you know, you're being like 19-years old, I got me a plan, I got this attitude type thing, and then Uncle Sam gets hold of you and you get to Vietnam and you change your attitude and you grow up real quick. You get a lot of responsibility dumped on you real quick and you either prove yourself or you don't. And, that's how you came about. Not necessarily just on a gun truck but any situation, I think. You'd look for dependable people, people you depend on, you knew that wouldn't you didn't think wouldn't cut and run. Whatever it took.

**Killblane:** How about you, how did you feel being on the Ace, or the King Kong for that matter?

**Cochran:** Well, like Sammy. I was proud that the crew trusted me enough to be on there. And, the drivers had enough trust in me to leave me on there. I was glad to be on it.

**Killblane:** As compared to the other drivers how did you guys stand or how did you feel? I mean, you're kind of like the elite of truck drivers?

**Cochran:** We weren't on there for that.

**Killblane:** Okay.

**Cochran:** We lived in the same place, we ate the same food, there were no differences between us and them.

**Killblane:** Back to the armament, why twin .50s on the back and then singles up on the front corners?

**Seay:** Think about a gun truck or anything else you can get so much or so many things in one spot that none of them are 100% efficient. You try to situate your guns where they can be effective. You had to get them mounted out far enough beyond the gun box that you could actually shoot down and that's what your smaller arms were for mostly, not long range. You had to also consider close up. Of course the twin .50s in the rear you could actually imagine the firepower you can have there. And you had a lot of swing up and down and left to right along with the single .50s in the front corners, right and left, you could cover front you could cover side. That's pretty well it, I guess. You just didn't always worry about long range. The .50s were awesome firepower at long range, a very deadly gun, but you also had to consider up close.

**Killblane:** That explains all the loose weapons.

**Seay:** Exactly.

**Killblane:** You mentioned about night convoys. I know in the early part of the war no one was driving at night. Where they driving at night when you got there or is that something that began while you were there?

**Cochran:** No. They were moving at night when I got there.

**Killblane:** From Cam Ranh Bay?

**Cochran:** Around Cam Ranh Bay, at least loading at night. I didn't go on that many night-time...

**Killblane:** Okay, there's that short run from the port or the depot to where you guys were staging, there was a night-run there. But out on Highway One or I don't remember the name of the highway that you guys had to run in...

**Seay:** (? Q O?) one was the main drag from Da Nang.

**Killblane:** Did you run that at night?

**Cochran:** Yeah, I think so, as good as I can remember. It was a long time ago, it's hard to remember.

**Killblane:** What do you remember?

**Seay:** We did night convoys. I remember sitting on top of Hai Van Pass in pitch-black dark and looking off in the China Sea. Yeah, we did night convoys.

**Killblane:** So, you guys were basically running 24 hours a day?

**Seay:** Sometimes.

**Killblane:** Let me ask you this: from Cam Ranh Bay, well you went up to Phu Bai, from Cam Ranh Bay your destination usually takes you a day, the long hauls are a day out and a day back?

**Cochran:** I didn't go back to Cam Ranh Bay. I was at Sha Rang Valley most of the time.

**Killblane:** Oh, yeah, Qui Nhon, excuse me.

**Cochran:** That's where we were at. I don't think I ever got back to Cam Ranh Bay. Not that far south.

**Killblane:** Then, when you moved north, how long were your runs?

**Cochran:** Depending on where they sent us. 100 miles sometimes, I guess. It just depends. I really don't know exactly mileage-wise.

**Killblane:** Well I'm thinking in terms of hours.

**Cochran:** Sometimes all day to get there. Then, a night there, load at night, whenever they were ready to load, then get back the next day.

**Killblane:** Because the night convoy is something really unique. I hadn't talked to anybody that dealt with that, so I'm trying to get a feel. Before, you had to load up and be ready to roll out at 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning. Then you'd get like from Qui Nhon to Pleiku or wherever your destination was, turn around and come back. And then you had to be back before they shut down the QL [Route] 19. And basically get back about 7 o'clock and do all your post-op maintenance. Now that you're doing night runs when are you leaving? Are they leaving at any time during the day staggering?

**Seay:** Most of the time we would leave for a convoy early in the morning. Sometimes that didn't happen due to various things. A lot of the information wasn't given to us. We were just told to "go with them." The higher ups took care of that. Sometimes you made the convoy and you wouldn't come back that day. Or sometimes you'd get up to Camp Evans or Quang Tri or somewhere up that way up. You'd come to a fire base and they would load you or you would unload whatever the case might be. And you came back after dark or you left after dark that type of thing. Sometimes you laid over and slept where you could. There was no set pattern per se. It just happened.

**Killblane:** So the difference is from down south, there is no restriction from you driving at night. If you're running late on your destination you could turn around and drive back at night?

**Seay:** We did.

**Killblane:** Was there a different threat scenario at night? Was it more dangerous or about the same?

**Seay:** I guess everybody's always been afraid of the unknown. Of course, daily there in a combat situation the unknown situation was always at hand. After dark made it even worse because you were out there in the dark. That added to more stress, expecting anything at any time, of course you did that in the daytime, too, but, it seemed like it was worse at night. I don't know, they couldn't see as good, but they could certainly hear you.

**Killblane:** How many ambushes were you involved in?

**Seay:** I'd rather not talk about it.

**Cochran:** Three or four.

**Killblane:** How many were at night?

**Cochran:** Two of them I know.

**Killblane:** So, you'd say most of your contact was at night, ambushes?

**Cochran:** At night we couldn't get any chopper support. The day-time ambushes we'd holler and the Cobra's [UH-1] come up beside you. At night there wasn't any chopper support.

**Killblane:** That brings up another point, did you always leave with air cover?

**Seay:** No.

**Killblane:** Why did you not?

**Seay:** I don't know why we didn't. I wasn't in charge.

**Cochran:** But, they were in hollering distance. When we got hit we got on the radio and holler and they were there shortly a bunch of us sitting on a lot of firebases. So they didn't have to (?).

**Killblane:** As we talked before, one of the things I'm trying to get a feel for is an SOP [Standard Operating Procedures] for how you reacted in an ambush. Like the trucks, did they drive through, did they stop. Did they turn around? Where do you position yourself? And if you can't think of it can you use some examples of some of the ambushes and what you did do.

**Seay:** Every truck had NCOIC on it and they pretty well made the call. Of course they were in radio contact with the driver. They were in radio contact with the people in charge of the convoy, whoever that might be. Because the driver was kind of isolated to what he could see and what he could not see if you were a driver. Let me say this before I go any further, the driver, I think in my opinion, over a period of time had been kind of left out. They were as important, more so than the gunners maybe. How can you protect the convoy if you can't move the truck?

**Killblane:** Tell me about what you remember about ambushes, techniques, and any SOPs that you used.

**Cochran:** I guess there all different. They don't mess with something that is all the same. There were different situations which ever you go.

**Killblane:** Could you tell me what the trucks do in the ambush?

**Cochran:** Wherever the ambush is at, we try to get the gun truck to the area. Get the trucks out, and if we have to push a truck off the side of the road to get the convoy through, we're going to get it through somehow or another. At least a portion of it that's in the ambush. It may be another gun truck will hold the rest of them back out of the ambush.

**Killblane:** What situations were you in that you drove the trucks through the kill zone?

**Cochran:** At Khe Sanh we got there in one night and they knocked a tanker truck off the road and maybe another cargo truck. One was burning on the side of the road. The other one was off over here. We got up there and we were shooting it out. The truck driver stopped and got out of his truck, so we had to make him get back in his truck and get out of there so the rest of the convoy could come on through.

**Killblane:** Why was the decision made to drive the rest of the convoy through the kill zone?

**Cochran:** There was nowhere else to go and nowhere to turn around, you had to go.

**Killblane:** Because it was so narrow?

**Cochran:** Yes on the top of a mountain at Khe Sanh, there was nowhere to go.

**Killblane:** How large was the ambush?

**Cochran:** I don't know, but they took two truck out, so, I don't know how many was out there, probably about five or six out there.

**Killblane:** How many gun trucks were involved in the kill zone?

**Cochran:** Kong and Uncle Meat was in it.

**Killblane:** Plus the Ace, or just those two?

**Cochran:** I don't know. The Ace may have been in front and couldn't get back.

**Killblane:** It didn't get back in time?

**Cochran:** Yeah, because there wasn't anywhere to turn around.

**Killblane:** How long did the ambush last before, did you have a QRF [Quick Reaction Force] come in to sweep the area? Did the gun trucks (? Till the end)?

**Cochran:** The ambush probably lasted for five, ten minutes, fifteen. We started out, like if somebody radioed back and thought they lost a driver back there in one of them trucks. So we turned around and went back and there wasn't any driver there. Somebody done picked him up and got him out. We turned around and started going back and mortars started coming on top of us, someone called in mortars on us. They was dropping on the road behind us. They dropped some next to Meat and splashed mud and stuff all over the side of them and we're having to outrun our own mortar shells.

**Killblane:** The other ambushes where you turn around where there's room to turn around.

**Cochran:** If you've got room to turn around. Most of the time we'd hold them off and try to run them on through.

**Killblane:** Should a gun truck be in the middle of the kill zone or on the edge of the kill zone to put suppressive fire?

**Cochran:** I like to have them all three. Usually the one that's caught in the middle is already there, try to bring them in on each end at least to give us firepower in like that. It depends on the situation where you were at, depending on where you're caught at.

**Killblane:** When the enemy initiated the ambushes was there a pattern to it, like they want to take out the gun truck first, or a fuel tanker?

**Cochran:** A fuel tanker makes a good bomb. So, it depends on what's in the convoy on what they're going to hit. They always want a gun truck real bad. But, they're scared of them.

**Seay:** What they tried to do was shut that convoy down and catch you in a road so narrow you didn't have anywhere to go. Naturally, if they could knock one out in front of you and one behind you, you're just a sitting duck.

**Killblane:** When you say knock one out, knock out a truck?

**Seay:** Knock the truck out. Take the truck out.

**Killblane:** Any particular truck or just any truck?

**Seay:** Tankers were really good. If they couldn't get that they'd take whatever they could get, like a powder truck. They wanted those gun trucks out of there because per se we were tearing their play up. Every situation was different. Every convoy was different. Every gun truck was different. Every crewman was different. Every ambush was different. Everything that happened was different. Even though you had armor plating all over your truck, if you had armor you had firepower. Unless you just had to you didn't want to pull right in the middle of the firefight.

Why take a chance on knocking out what little bit of security you had? If you got the capability of reaching where they are where you are, let's do it. There were times that the gun truck would pull right in the hot zone, there's no doubt about that, many, many times. And, sometimes depending on the NCOIC or who was making call the call in the back. They'd tell you how to situate that truck. You know, cross step or over, back it up or pull it up or whatever. You always wanted to leave yourself room to get out to back up again.

**Killblane:** That's a good point.

**Seay:** It's just like backing into a curb, you know, I mean leave yourself a way to get out. NCOICs were a unique person, they were kids making big-time decisions. And they weren't always right. But, they made the ones they thought were right at the time. That all you've got to do with. That's all you could do.

**Cochran:** The night the Kong, when I was on it, shot the cannons out from under the Kong with that big 40, made (?) ambush (?) darkness when they were pin down outside of Vandedrift. They was right there, they see us in a ditch. They were unloading on them so we run right up in the middle of it to keep them off them. Uncle Meat and Satan come in on the other side to help protect all us I think it was, the best I can remember, they shot duels out from under us the King Kong had AK [AK47] holes in the side of it.

**Killblane:** So, you basically, this is one time where you went in specifically to protect a downed gun truck.

**Cochran:** Well, they were fixing to get them, so, we went right in the middle of it so they would finished them off. And, the other trucks came in, of course we all got shot up pretty good.

**Seay:** You've got to remember the very important thing that people don't understand is they keep looking for a pattern. They keep looking for a pattern for this thing. There was no pattern. Every day was something different.

**Cochran:** Whatever happened, happened on the spur of the moment.

**Seay:** There was some spots that you could pretty well plan on if you didn't get hit you'd think you're going to get hit. But, they might do the unexpected and that's what you had to plan for. You had to be aware of that. Just go on and deal with it the best you could.

**Killblane:** Let me ask you on the organization of the convoy, did they tend to keep like your heavy vehicles, tractors and trailers, tankers toward the rear, or just it didn't matter? How did you organize it?

**Seay:** It just depended on how they were staged when we were lining them up. That's my knowledge of it. I've seen a lot of different combinations, I've seen them scattered out various ways.

**Cochran:** Down south they kept them a little straighter, but in the north they just kind of fell in.

**Killblane:** Getting towards the end, how many days out did you start beginning to feel short and what could precautions did you take?

**Cochran:** I don't know what kind of precautions you could take. Probably a month and a half, something like that, 30 days.

**Killblane:** Well, did you have the option to get off convoys?

**Cochran:** Off convoys?

**Killblane:** From driving within 30 days?

**Cochran:** The got the short timer back then they took me off the gun truck because I was getting short, I getting worried about getting shot. But, I went to drive cargo after that I still run.

**Killblane:** Say again?

**Cochran:** I went back driving cargo for the last month.

**Killblane:** How many days out did you quit driving?

**Cochran:** Three or four days.

**Killblane:** What about you?

**Seay:** About the same. When I came off the gun truck, I run cargo, 5 ton. I worked in the tire shop some more or less wherever you were needed.

**Killblane:** How far out did you get off the gun truck?

**Seay:** Two weeks maybe. Something like that, I don't remember. I have any exact dates on any of that. I didn't think I'd need it 31 years later.

**Killblane:** How did you feel about going home and leaving Vietnam?

**Seay:** I guess one part of me I couldn't wait to get gone. You dread it after being there doing the things you did and you established this bond, and you established and rebuilt a new family you didn't know you had. Here you are with these people, these guys you depended on for your very existence, they need you and you kind of felt like you deserved them. And, a part of you wanted to go and part of you wanted to stay.

**Killblane:** How about you?

**Cochran:** I think he told it pretty good.



**Killblane:** Well, we're running out of time and you guys gave me what I was looking for, so thank you.